

# Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District

Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



## Velázquez Unveils Legislation to Aid HSIs

Congresswoman Velázquez unveiled legislation, the Hispanic Serving Institutions Act, to provide a steady source of funding to colleges and universities that serve a large number of Hispanic, low-income, first-generation college students, also known as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

"With graduation season upon us, we are reminded of the difference a college degree can make," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "As our nation faces the tightest job market in 20 years, it is critical that minorities have access to higher education – a necessity to compete in today's workforce."

Even though Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the U.S., they have the lowest levels of education attainment. HSIs attempt to bridge this gap by providing special services, such as counseling and tutoring, to help at-risk students stay in school and complete their education.

HSIs are able to effectively serve Hispanic students through Title V grants provided by the U.S. Department of Education. Title V grants range from \$400,000 to \$600,000 annually, and for many HSIs, which operate on very small budgets, this funding can be the difference between staying open and closing down. Currently, the Title V law prevents a steady flow of funds to HSIs because these grants are awarded for a five-year period followed by a two-year waiting period. The act would eliminate the two-year waiting period for these grants.

"Because funding has increased and the majority of eligible institutions are being served, this wait-out period is unnecessary," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "By making this small change, we would make a big difference in helping HSIs achieve their mission – to provide more Hispanics with the opportunity to earn college degrees."

Between 1999 and 2002, \$4.6 million in funding was provided to HSIs in New York City.

## \$25,000 to Waterfront Museum and Barge

Joined by local groups, Congresswoman Velázquez presented the Waterfront Museum and Showboat Barge with a check in the amount of \$25,000 last month. Velázquez successfully secured the federal funding to be used for a project to showcase the historic nature of the waterway, which will include a floating classroom for maritime and environmental education in the Red Hook area of Brooklyn.

"The Waterfront Museum has shown such devotion to educating the public about this historical waterway," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The \$25,000 will allow the museum to continue providing valuable educational and cultural programs – including the development of a maritime floating classroom – for local residents and others from around the city, state and country who visit the museum."

The funds will also supplement the museum's education initiative, cultural programs and general operating support. This will include work with area schools, curriculum development for educational initiatives and workshops, technical assistance, cultural programming and media outreach.



Congresswoman Velázquez presents a check in front of a crowd at the Waterfront Museum and Showboat Barge.

## Velázquez Requests Study on Disaster Loans

Congresswoman Velázquez has requested the U.S. General Accounting Office to study whether or not all small businesses that could have benefited from an SBA Disaster Assistance Program loan following the September 11 attacks, 2001, received one.

"The Small Business Administration's (SBA) Disaster Assistance Program served a vital role in responding to the victims of September 11, but many of these loans were not successful," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "By requesting that GAO conduct this study, we hope to successfully secure future loans to small businesses that have been faced with challenges resulting from disaster."

Congresswoman Velázquez intends to use the results of the GAO study as the basis for a legislative proposal aimed at expanding and improving the Disaster Assistance Program. Through this proposal, the program's scope would be widened, barriers would be removed that would prevent potential borrowers from receiving program assistance, and would enable the federal government to be more capable of responding during future disasters.

Following the 9/11 attacks, Congresswoman Velázquez introduced H.R. 3011, the Small Business Emergency Relief Act (SBERA). SBERA would provide low interest and no-cost loans, payment grace periods, forgiveness of existing SBA loans, and grants, but it was blocked by the Republican leadership.

# Local Organization Honors Velázquez

Project Reach Youth (PRY) honored Congresswoman Velázquez at its Annual Spring Gala reception for her commitment to education and for her support of valuable education programming throughout Brooklyn.

“Providing opportunity and resources for education is extremely important in securing the well-being and stability of our community now and in the future,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “An education for young people can determine the course they take in life. I will push for federal funds so PRY can continue the innovative programming that touches the lives of thousands of young people in our community every year.”

Velázquez requested \$110 million in funding for two critically important federal community technology programs, the Technology Opportunities Program (TOP) and the Community Technology Centers (CTC) initiative. Funding for these programs, which provide technology access in economically-distressed areas, was eliminated in President Bush’s latest budget. As a recipient of CTC funding, PRY was able to create two computer labs and hire computer tutors, successfully integrating technology into many of its youth education programs.

Money raised at the event went towards PRY’s programming, ranging from initiatives for preschool aged children, after-school centers, college preparation and job readiness training for teens, to ESOL classes and citizen-



Chair of BOD for Partnership for Afterschool Education, Alison Overseth, Congresswoman Velázquez and PRY Executive Director, Robert Madison.

ship programs for immigrant adults.

For the past 35 years, PRY has served as a vital resource for the youth and families living in the South Brooklyn area. PRY’s programming includes education, counseling and youth development and serves approximately 7,000 children, teens and adult family members each year.

## Brooklyn Chamber Meets in D.C.

Velázquez hosts legislative summit for Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Members of the Brooklyn business community were able to discuss local economic needs during the annual legislative summit hosted by Congresswoman Velázquez in Washington, D.C.

“Small businesses are the backbone of New York City’s economy, but they face many challenges, given the current business climate,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “Today’s event gave me the opportunity to listen to the concerns of chamber members, answer their questions, and discuss what changes we can make together to foster economic growth in our communities.”

During the summit, Congresswoman Velázquez discussed how the cost of President Bush’s tax plan will mean the elimination of – and deep cuts to – many federal small business programs, her legislative agenda for the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, and her work as Ranking Member of the House Small Business Committee.

Congresswoman Velázquez also pointed to small business legislation she will introduce this Congress. She will be pushing bills to make health care more affordable for small businesses, provide New York City small businesses with more federal contracting opportunities, reduce the federal paperwork burden on small firms, and include small businesses in the remediation and reuse of Brownfields sites.

Congresswoman Velázquez meets with members of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce annually to discuss economic development and other local issues for Brooklyn.



Brooklyn Chamber president Kenneth Adams and Congresswoman Velázquez speak at the summit.

## Grants Awarded to Our Community

### Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC)

St. Agatha School \$22,080.35

*For Internet access and telcomm services*

### National Endowment for the Arts

Eyebeam Atelier, Inc. \$10,000

*To support continuation of New Media Collaborative*

Brooklyn Arts Council, Inc. \$15,000

*To support Folk Feet, a festival celebrating dance*

### Department of Education

New York State Dept. \$915,679

New York Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped \$1,734,627

New York Office of Vocational Rehabilitation \$1,907,518

New York Office of Children and Family Services \$537,752

New York State Education Department \$51,090

New York State Commission on Quality of Care for Mentally Disabled \$933,103